

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested in view of the above amendments to the claims and the following remarks. For the Examiner's convenience and reference, Applicant's remarks are presented in the order in which the corresponding issues were raised in the Office Action.

Please note that the following remarks are not intended to be an exhaustive enumeration of the distinctions between any cited references and the claimed invention. Rather, the distinctions identified and discussed below are presented solely by way of example to illustrate some of the differences between the claimed invention and the cited references. In addition, Applicants request that the Examiner carefully review any references discussed below to ensure that Applicants understanding and discussion of the references, if any, is consistent with the Examiner's understanding.

In the Office Action, claims 1, 3, 6-12, 15, 18, 39-44 and 47-51 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) over U.S. Patent Publication No. 2002/0172471 to Slater et al. ("Slater"), and claims 45 and 46 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Slater. With this Amendment, claims 1, 9, 41, and 43 are amended, and claim 39 is cancelled. Claims 1, 3, 6-12, 15, 18, and 40-51 remain pending.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §102(e)

Applicants traverse the rejection of claims 1, 3, 6-12, 15, 18, 39-44 and 47-51 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) over Slater for at least the reason that Slater fails to disclose or suggest at least, "wherein the sleeve has . . . a beveled inside edge," as recited in claim 1. The Office Action alleges disclosure of "a beveled inside edge" in Fig. 4 of Slater. Office Action at 3. After careful review of Slater, however, Fig. 4 fails to show any beveled edge, either inside or outside. Similarly, Slater fails to disclose or suggest "wherein the edge of the inside diameter is a beveled edge," as recited in claim 9, and "wherein the means for holding a ferrule has . . . a beveled inside edge," as recited in claim 43. Because Slater fails to disclose or suggest each and every claim element, independent claims 1, 9 and 43 are in condition for allowance. Claim 39 is canceled, obviating the rejection of the claim. Claims 3, 6-8, 10-12, 15, 18, 40-42, 44 and 47-51

each depend from one of claims 1, 9 and 43, and are allowable at least for their dependence on an allowable claim.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

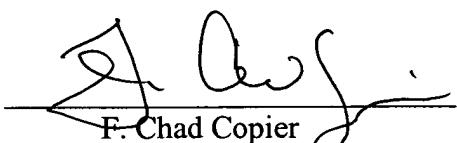
Applicants traverse the rejection of claims 45 and 46 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Slater for at least the reason that Slater fails to disclose or suggest each and every claim element as discussed above. Claims 45 and 46 are allowable at least for their dependence on claim 43.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and reexamination of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims. The Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned if the Examiner believes that a telephone interview or Examiner's amendment will further the prosecution of this application.

Respectfully submitted,
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